Mini Lathes and General Lathe Tips

Excerpts from The Message Boards

Don Thompson in Cutler Ridge, Florida asked:

The optional Jet Mini Lathe stand looks kind of wobbly. Anyone have experience with it?

Tony Dentino replied:

I have the Jet stand. It's not wobbly at all. A good solid stand.

Peter Teubel echoed:

Very well designed. Stable and no cross piece on the floor to trip over. The only drawback to the Jet stand is the fact it doesn't store very well (assembled). Friends have also used the Jet mini stand for other small lathes. Works very well.

Rod Peterson chimed in:

At the End-O-Pond Picnic in April 2003 Ken Salisbury and Al Crandall (and some others) brought their Jets. Ken has the Jet stand and Al brought the clone he built. There is nothing wimpy about either one. I've tried to get Al to build me one like his ever since, but he still blames me for the nasty burn he got the year before at Pond-O-Rama '02. Tired of turning on my Workmutt, I've thought about buying the Jet several times but can't get past the price. I talked to a local welding shop and he quoted me an estimate about three times the Jet price. Nice as the Jet is, I think I'll just build one out of wood. Especially after seeing the other suggestions in this article.

Jennifer Shirley intoned:

I have the Jet stand and love it. It's very solid and sturdy and the best part is that it's easy to take with you when you take the lathe. Well worth the cost and aggravation of making one.

Scott Greaves summarised:

I have the Jet stand for the Jet mini. It is very solid and well made, just like the lathe. I highly recommend it! Of course it does not have drawers, so I would recommend making a tray with a lip around it from 3/4" plywood, to fit in-between the lathe and the stand. This would allow you to collect dust and chips just like any other stand! It really is a nice stand that allows you to get right up to your lathe.

Danny Wells started the cascade of alternatives by saying:

I put my Jet Mini on one of those inexpensive woodworking benches that you can buy at a DIY store for about $100. Works great.

Robert Cox from the minimalist school suggested:

Concrete blocks.

6x6 footers. 4" hollow blocks. 2 3/8" allthread in each end to 2x4 cross pieces.

Bolt the lathe to cross pieces.

Oh yeah, One diagonal brace just for fun.

Larry Barnes offered:

This is a stand I made for the Jet Mini. The drawers have no bottoms so that chisels can be stored and left open while turning, and the chips will fall through. The whole thing was made out of MDF except for a little hardwood edge banding, and drawer fronts.

Fred in NC added:

I made mine from ¾" birch plywood. It has four lockable casters from Woodcraft.

Ron Z contributed:

The Vicmarc VL100 is similar (*as is the Delta*, ed.) so I thought I'd post this if it's a help to anyone. I know almost zero about flatwork except for using plywood and screws. This setup evolved over about a year. I use this for demonstrations and it is portable and on wheels. The latest addition is the PVC *holsters* for the tools. It's extremely handy and they act as a bumper guard when I load the setup into my trailer.

Here's Vicky in the beginning. A salvaged desk top and saw horse.

This is a current picture. This is just back from a demo so it's clean.

Here's a close up of the *holsters*. They're made of 1¼" pipe, any wider and the handles might go through. The long side is 8" and both ends were cut at 30° on the miter on the bandsaw. I have seen something like this posted around here so if it was your idea, stand up and take credit. The tools are color coded for easy access.

I have extended the tailstock lock lever with a cocobolo handle as I have problems with my arm and tightening it so this way I get increased leverage.

Bill in Casa Grande countered:

The custom stands look great but I would rather spend my time turning than doing flat work.

My Jet 1014 sits on a roll around mechanics chest purchased from Sears. The chests come in different heights or you can modify the top as required for your size. I can store all my small stuff in the drawers and roll it to where I want it. Medium cheap and very fast. I can also take it in total to craft shows for demo.

Rod Peterson (again) opined:

Having experienced the advantages of an open stand I built for a larger Craftsman tube bed lathe (detritus build up on the floor instead of around the base of the lathe), I planned on incorporating that theme in my Jet stand. Larry's shelves carry that theme even further, as do Ron's *holsters*.

Someone also recently posted a tray they built that rests on the ways of the lathe and holds three or four of the most regularly used chisels perpendicular to the ways. An open frame is a good idea there, too.

Chad Smith asked:

Just got a Jet VS Mini lathe from Santa. I'm working on a bench for it and was wondering what is a good height to turn at.

Jamie Donaldson offered:

Chad, most turners will be happy with spindle height about the same as your elbow when bent at 90° (right angle).

Steven Woodward posted this on *rec.woodworking*:

...standard heights for woodworking machines from **Humanscale 1/2/3** (Diffrient, et al: The MIT Press: Bk&Acces edition; November 15, 1974: out of print) [says, in part]:

lathe	42
centers	"

[S]tandard heights were developed over time to match the Average american male who was 68.8" tall in 1973 when **Humanscale 1/2/3** was [first] published. Almost every modern woodworking machine seems to be lower than the above standards, and even lower than they were 20 years ago. This gives great flexibility for those who are shorter than 68.8" (male or female) but most folks will want to raise their

machines for optimum ergonomics. I have raised my equipment to the standard heights published in **Humanscale 1/2/3** by adding casters. That is still a little low because I am about 70" tall, but I am shrinking with age so it should be about perfect just before I expire.

Suggestion for calculating your ideal equipment height.

Ideal Height = 42 x your height / 68.8

This method is based on the assumption that our bodies are proportioned to our height—i.e. short people have shorter arms and legs, tall people have long ones. This is usually true.

Fred in NC suggested:

I must credit Russ Fairfield with the idea of using a wool painting roller for buffing.

This one is 9" with ¾" nap. The adapters are my own design. I turned two wood plugs. The headstock plug has a Morse taper in one end (turned as part of the plug), and the other end was turned down to fit into the roller. The tailstock end was turned down to fit into the roller, with a 60° taper to fit the live center. A ridge or collar keeps the plugs from going too far into the roller.

For small items, such as pens, one roller can be used with more than one buffing compound. The paint roller I got from the borg cost about $8, and I use the roller in four sections: Tripoli, white diamond, TSW, and bare. TSW or *Trade Secret for Wood* is a wax that I use for pens and other small turnings. I apply the TSW to the wood, and let it dry for a minute or two. Then buff. Some stays on the wheel. Bee's wax and carnauba can be applied directly to the roller.

Darrell Feltmate added:

I have been doing the same for some time except that I use a polyester roller for its limited abrasive quality and I have it mounted on the drill press. It works well.